

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 /091 W
-----011440 031622Z /43

P R 031449Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6583
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY BERN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USCINCEUR
USNMR SHAPE
USDOCOSOUTH
CINCUSNAVEUR
CINCUSAFE
CINCUSAREUR

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BRUSSELS FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, GR, US
SUBJECT: DEFENSE SECRETARY BROWN'S COMMENTS ON GREECE

REF: (A) ATHENS 5547, (B) STATE 167340
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1. THE "BROWN AFFAIR" CONTINUES TO BE AN IMPORTANT STORY IN
THE PRESS OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS, ALTHOUGH MUCH OF THE VENOM IN
THE COVERAGE WAS DRAINED BY THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT (REFTEL B)
AND INTEREST IS BEGINNING TO WANE.

2. THE PRESS ON SATURDAY WAS DIVIDED IN ITS REPORTING ON

SECRETARY BROWN'S COMMENTS BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE. PRO-GOVERNMENT AKROPOLIS REPORTED THE GOG HAD ASKED FOR OFFICIAL CLARIFICATIONS (WHICH THE GOG LATER CATEGORICALLY DENIED). OTHER GOVERNMENT SUPPORTING NEWSPAPERS TENDED TO SOFT-PEDAL THE IMPLICATIONS FOR GREECE OF SECRETARY BROWN'S COMMENTS IN THEIR REPORTING, WHILE STRONGLY ATTACKING THE SECRETARY IN THEIR EDITORIALS. THE OPPOSITION PRESS, ON THE OTHER HAND, GAVE THE TOPIC BANNER TREATMENT AND WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL THAT NEITHER THE EMBASSY NOR WASHINGTON HAD ISSUED ANY STATEMENTS ON THE MATTER. LEFTIST TA NEA PUBLISHED AN EFSTATHIADIS COLUMN WHICH REPORTED THE CIA HAD A CONTINGENCY PLAN READY SINCE 1975 IN CASE OF A LEFTIST TAKEOVER IN GREECE. THE COMMUNIST PRESS CHARGED THAT THE GOG HAD NOT TAKEN A STRONG ENOUGH STANCE. ALL THE NEWSPAPERS AGREED ON THE NEED FOR THE UNITY OF THE GREEK PEOPLE IN THE FACE OF THIS "PROVOCATION."

3. AFTER THE DEPARTMENT'S RELEASE ON THE SUBJECT, FOREIGN MINISTER RALLIS ISSUED A PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT THE DEPARTMENT'S CLARIFICATION INDICATED THAT THE U.S. HAD NO INTENTION OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN GREEK INTERNAL AFFAIRS. THE GOG ALSO DISTRIBUTED THE TEXT OF THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT, AS DID THE EMBASSY. CONSEQUENTLY, THE SUNDAY COVERAGE WAS GENERALL LESS VITRIOLIC. THE STORY WAS STILL HEADLINE MATERIAL IN THE OPPOSITION PRESS WHICH BRANDED THE CLARIFICATION AS INADEQUATE AND CHASTIZED THE GOG FOR JOINING THE USG IN ATTEMPTING TO CAMOUFLAGE WHAT IT CALLED THE REAL INTENT BEHIND SECRETARY BROWN'S REMARKS.

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TO VIMA BANNERED "RALLIS DISTRIBUTES AND INTERPRETS AMERICAN 'CLARIFICATIONS' -- ANGUISHED ATTEMPT TO COVER BROWN'S THREAT." TO VIMA CALLED THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT A PARTICULAR GAFFE SINCE, ACCORDING TO THE NEWSPAPER, IT INSINUATED THE U.S. WOULD REFRAIN FROM INTERVENING ONLY AS LONG AS GREECE BEHAVED IN ACCORDANCE WITH AMERICA'S WISHES. THE COMMUNIST PRESS CHARGED THAT THE CLARIFICATION SIMPLY CONFIRMED THE U.S. HAD PLANS TO INTERVENE. THE GOVERNMENT SUPPORTING PRESS HERALDED IT AS EVIDENCE THAT THE U.S. HAD NO SUCH INTENTION AND REPORTED THAT THE GOG ACCEPTED THE CLARIFICATIONS.

4. HOWEVER, ON SUNDAY OPPOSITION LEADER PAPANDREOU RENEWED HIS OFFENSIVE BY SHARPLY ATTACKING RALLIS FOR HIS POSITION AND THE MFA'S DISTRIBUTION OF THE TEXT OF THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT. PAPANDREOU CRIED THAT THESE ACTIONS SHOWED THAT GREECE WAS BUT A PROTECTORATE OF THE U.S. AND ZEROED IN ON THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF THE STATEMENT BY SAYING THE U.S. DOES NOT POSSESS THE RIGHT TO HAVE OR NOT HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE GREEKS. HE REITERATED HIS CALL FOR GREECE TO BREAK WITH THE U.S. AND WITH NATO. THE UDC'S ZIGDIS PARTIALLY ACCEPTED THE CLARIFICATION, BUT CLAIMED A "DISGUISED THREAT" REMAINED. HE, TOO, URGED A REVISION IN THE

CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE USG AND THE GREEK GOVERNMENT.
PAPANDREOU'S ATTACK WAS THE BASIS FOR THE REPORTING ON MONDAY
ON THE "BROWN AFFAIR", BUT EXCEPT FOR TA NEA, WHICH CONTINUED
TO MAKE IT THE MAIN STORY, THE ISSUE HAD SLIPPED FROM THE FRONT
PAGE.

5. COMMENT: THE GREEK PRESS' MISINTERPRETATION OF SECRETARY
BROWN'S COMMENTS MAY HAVE GIVEN US YET ANOTHER BLACK EYE,
BUT IT WILL NOT HAVE AN ENDURING EFFECT. PRIVATELY, SOME OF OUR
FRIENDS HAVE LAMENTED THE DEFENSE SECRETARY'S EXACT CHOICE OF
WORDS, BUT IN THE SAME BREATH THEY HASTEN TO ADD THAT THEY ARE
ENCOURAGED THAT THE U.S., AS THE LEADER OF THE WESTERN WORLD, IS
PREPARED FOR ANY EVENTUALITY.

MCCLOSKEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES, MILITARY PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ATHENS05631
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780274-0194
Format: TEL
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197807101/aaaadhiy.tel
Line Count: 136
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a14cc06a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 ATHENS 5547, 78 STATE 167340
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1850366
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEFENSE SECRETARY BROWN'S COMMENTS ON GREECE
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, GR, US, (BROWN, HAROLD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a14cc06a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014